



migration begins in August. Among marsh birds, coots are one of the more adaptable species.

### **Habitats**

Constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; natural lakes and prairie marshes; temporary water supplies

### **Iowa Status**

common; native

### **Iowa Range**

summer: scattered throughout Iowa in suitable habitats; migrant: statewide

### **Bibliography**

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.

## **American coot**

*Fulica americana*

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Aves
Order:	Gruiformes
Family:	Rallidae

### **Features**

An adult American coot is 13 to 16 inches long. Both sexes are similar in appearance. This bird has a dark bluish-gray body with a darker head and throat. The bill is white with a spot of red at the base. There is a white spot under the tail and white tips on the underside of the wings. The American coot has red eyes.

### **Natural History**

The American coot lives on and around ponds, lakes, mudflats, marshes, and other places where there is short grass around water. This bird will eat aquatic insects, crayfish, and mollusks (snails, mussels), but primarily eats aquatic plants. It dives in deep water to gather food. The call is "kuk-kuk-kuk-kuk." Migration occurs at night. Spring migrants may be seen as early as February. Nesting occurs from May through June with the nest built on a mound of dead vegetation over water. Five to 15 tan eggs with dark spots are laid. Chicks are dark with red-orange heads. Fall